



# Cornerstones

Every student. Every school. Every year.



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1200 First Street, NE | Washington, DC 20002  
202.442.5885 | F 202.442.5026  
[dcps.dc.gov](http://dcps.dc.gov)



# Cornerstones: Putting Learning to Work

In every grade and course, Cornerstones make learning matter. Students masterfully use academic content to solve real-world problems, prepare for future careers, design sophisticated creative works, and advocate for a better world.



## Kindergarten Conservation

Kindergarteners learn to support a clean neighborhood by reusing “trash” to create new treasures.



## High School Chemistry

Students experiment with reactions to design long-lasting hand warmers for arctic fishermen.



## Middle School Math

Students use their understanding of volume to design and 3D print artistic and accurate measuring spoons.



## Middle School Health

Students use their understanding of physiology as they learn CPR.





# The Power of the Cornerstone Task

**High quality tasks such as Cornerstones are a proven lever for systemic change. At DCPS, Cornerstones are much more than a set of lesson plans - they present an exciting, evolving, and shared vision of the boundless potential of urban education in the 21st century.**

## A Force for Equity

Cornerstones are helping to assure that system-wide, every student's classroom is infused with rigor, depth, and joy. In addition to detailed lesson plans, teachers also receive custom supply kits. As a result, authentic tools, state-of-the-art technology support, and inspiring materials create a high floor for quality in every ward in the city.

## A Blueprint for Teacher Learning

Cornerstones are developed by top DCPS teachers, allowing them to share their expertise beyond the walls of their own schools.

Through professional collaboration, teachers master powerful teaching models such as inquiry, project-based learning, and seminar discussion. As a result, students are more active and engaged in questioning, problem solving, and developing deep knowledge.

## A Culture of Excellence

Students, inspired by worthwhile tasks and guided by the standards of the professional community, polish their own work until it shines. Teachers use shared rubrics and compare student work, so excellence means the same high standard at every school. Teachers collaborate across schools to develop better ways to support excellence for diverse learners.





# Lessons to Remember

Cornerstones are the lessons students will remember years from now. Whether learning to ride a bicycle, creating character-infused shadow puppets, raising caterpillars until they become butterflies, or advocating for change in society, the positive and lasting impact of content mastery is at the very center of each Cornerstone experience.



*"It makes me feel happy to learn something that I never got to learn before."*

Student, Shepherd Elementary School





# Cornerstones expand the scope of student aspirations by immersing them in the inspiring and meaningful work of real-world professionals.

From kindergarten through 12th grade, students apply the content they learn to solve problems such as cleaning up oil spills or engineering low-cost solar ovens. At every grade level, Cornerstone experiences connect students with role models, heroes, and pathways to success, encouraging them to work hard and dream big.



**Firefighter:**  
Kindergarten  
*Community Helpers*



**Environmental Engineers:**  
Grade 5  
*Pollution Solution*



**Dancer:**  
Grade 4  
*What is a Hero?*



# Cornerstones

## Inspiration, engagement, and excellence in every subject

